

Karlene Lehman
Judiciary Cmte
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Members of the Senate Judiciary Committees. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon regarding Senate Bill 64 and Senate Bill 65. My name is Karlene Lehman, and I am currently head of the Michigan portfolio for GFI Management Services, Inc. GFI manages approximately 3,000 apartments in Michigan, including Harrison Township, Southfield, Oak Park and Belleville, and nearly 20,000 nationwide.

I have been in the apartment management industry for 25+ years doing business all over Michigan, as well as Houston, Atlanta, and southern Florida. Threats of violence against local management staff increased dramatically in the past five years. As a member of the Apartment Association, I hear similar stories from other management agents and owners. Our Tenant Selection Criteria remains strict. We research credit, perform nationwide criminal background checks, review OTIS, check sex offender's list, and review landlord references. However, this struggling economic climate sometimes pushes otherwise good residents to their breaking point.

I believe property management employees should have recourse when someone threatens them for performing their job. Senate Bill 64 is a positive step towards allowing evictions for threats of violence against other tenants or management staff. Residents will still have their day in court to challenge the eviction. Two recent examples of threatened violence against Management are found below.

- In early May 2011, Mr. Clarence Kelly residing at Providence Tower Apartments in Southfield called GFI's New York corporate office to request a monetary rent credit he felt entitled to. Our New York office tried to explain what the charge was for and referred Mr. Kelly to GFI's Southfield office below. I spoke to him and again explained the legitimate \$118 charge to his account. His request turned into demands and then threats of violence against me personally if I did not credit his account ("*I know who you are and where you work*"). Later that same day, I visited Providence Tower's office while Mr. Kelly happened to be there. He recognized my voice as the same person to reject his credit earlier that day. Mr. Kelly was wearing a button down shirt over a t-shirt. He pulled his over-shirt open to reveal a gun in a shoulder holster and said something to the effect of "*Now I KNOW this (expletive) is going to give me my money*". I called Southfield Police. Because he did not pull the gun out of the holster, it was not "brandishing" and did not violate any law. I am embarrassed to say, Mr. Kelly received his credit. . . . And I no longer feel very safe in my corporate office because it is in the same apartment building where he resides.
- The Property Manager from the same Southfield apartment community quit on May 12 due to resident threats. A resident became fixated on her and visited the office nearly daily for four months. He would say "*Someone is going to mess you up and I will be there to watch them do it*", "*I got away with murder once and I will again*", "*If you evict me, you will be very sorry*", and "*I know where you live %&(*#, don't take me on*". The resident stood at the office door and followed her to her car every night. We had to assign maintenance to walk her out. He sat in the lobby for hours and followed her whenever she left to use the restroom or walked her building. I asked him to leave her alone, and he began banging on my corporate office door (same building) as well late at night when he saw the lights on. Eventually the resident unnerved the Manager to the extent she had recurring nightmares and felt her only alternative was to quit.

The criminal justice system does not necessarily help when we have a threatening resident – unless the resident actually performs the violent act threatened. Unfortunately, there are too many stories like those above occurring Statewide. Senate Bill 64 offers legal recourse and protection for residents and management staff.

Senate Bill 65

This requested change merely streamlines the process by removing the requirement that the Landlord file a police report when drugs are involved. Ninety percent of the time, the Police inform the Landlord a drug problem exists so the current requirement is superfluous.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Actual examples of threats of violence at apartment communities in Southeast Michigan:

From Jake Kenealy, Property Manager at Surrey Park Apartments, Ann Arbor, Michigan:

A situation arose between 2 residents that had been friendly in the past. Resident A became angry with Resident B and started to harass Resident B. Resident B is approximately 79 years of age while resident A is approximately 55 years of age. Resident B demanded that resident A leave him alone. **After continued confrontation Resident A became violent and tried to hit Resident B in the head with a 1X6 board.** The assault was broken up and resident A fled the scene. Immediately after the incident a 30-day notice was served to resident A and his girlfriend. **This allowed Resident A enough time to go to Jail and return to the property during the 30 days.** Resident A, did not cause any more trouble during this time other than trashing his apartment. He also was legally able to reside in the apartment for 30 days without paying rent.

If a 7-day notice to quit were issued it would have prevented the return of a dangerous resident, damage to the unit, loss of rent and further danger to other residents and employees.

From Margie Bolt, Community Director at Sutton Place Apartments, Southfield, Michigan:

On May 20, 2011, a member of our courtesy patrol reported a gray and black Ford Escape sitting at the turn around on Riverside Drive. The courtesy patrol approached the vehicle and observed 2 males inside. The patrol officer knocked on the window and asked them to roll down the window, when the window was rolled down; marijuana smoke billowed out of the vehicle. The patrol officer spoke to the two men about loitering and the fact that marijuana was illegal and not allowed on the property. They both chuckled as the driver took a hit from the marijuana and the passenger said, "We know".

After this incident, a termination of lease notice was sent to both units. On 5/31/11 these men aggressively approached another courtesy patrol officer while he was in the gate house. They used threatening gestures and voice tones and said that the courtesy patrol officers had caused them to get evicted and then stated "People get shot for that kind of thing around here!" The Southfield police were called in order to report this threat. It was necessary to increase the number of courtesy patrol officers at a large expense to the property and we were encouraged to keep the reporting courtesy patrol officer off the property for a while.

From Michelle Herrst, Regional Property Manager at Harbour Club, Belleville, MI

At the beginning of May, I had a confrontation with Brandon from Bldg 28. He was getting ready to drop a car on the property that didn't have any wheels on the back. I approached the resident and introduced myself and told him that the car was inoperable and if he left the car in the parking lot, we would have to tag and tow it because it would damage the pavement and being on jacks would be a safety hazard.

Brandon was very combative and said if I touched his car, he would "f&%\$ you up and your car too" and went off on a very angry rant and in several ways said he was going to beat my &%\$, etc. also, he was taking a defensive physical approach toward me. I'm a pretty resilient person and decided nothing good was going to come of continuing the conversation so I turned and walked away all the while, I was very concerned that he would come after me once my back was turned and prepared myself to be attached or hit from behind. I don't want to seem over dramatic, however this incident left me feeling vulnerable. Frankly, for several days after I took different routes home from work and did not leave at the end of the day by myself. I don't think that many people outside of our industry understand the danger we often face when it comes to managing our business. This incident is one of several instances where people think they can intimidate in order to get their way.